

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 DODE-00 CIAE-00 INRE-00

ACDE-00 /026 W

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P 251415Z OCT 75

FM USDEL SALT TWO GENEVA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2848

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SALT TWO GENEVA 425

EXDIS/SALT

DEPT ALSO PASS DOD AND SECDEF

SPECAT EXCLUSIVE FOR SECDEF

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PARM

SUBJECT: MEETING OF GENERAL ROWNY WITH GENERALS TRUSOV AND
BELETSKY ON OCTOBER 24, 1975 (SALT TWO - 828)

1. THE FOLLOWING IS A MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION QUOTED IN
FULL AS PREPARED BY GENERAL ROWNY OF A MEETING HELD IN HIS
OFFICE ON OCTOBER 24, 1975 WITH GERERALS TRUSOV AND
BELETSKY ON THE ISSUE OF THE BACKFIRE BOMBER.

2. QUOTE. AT THEIR INITIATIVE, GENERALS TRUSOV AND BELETSKY CALLED
ON ME FRIDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 24, 1975. DURING A THREE-
HOUR SUBSTANTIVE SESSION, CONFINED ENTIRELY TO BACKFIRE,
THEY MADE IT CLEAR THAT THEY CONSIDER BACKFIRE TO BE
A SERIOUS ISSUE STANDING IN THE WAY OF A NEW AGREE-
MENT.

TRUSOV OPENED, SAYING HE THOUGHT IT DESIREABLE
THAT WE BOTH MAKE CLEAR OUR POSITIONS ON BACKFIRE.
HE SAID THAT TO DO SO WE WOULD FIRST NEED TO AGREE
ON THE ROLE AIR-REFUELING PLAYS IN THE ISSUE. ALL
MODERN AIRCRAFT, REGARDLESS OF TYPE, WILL BE

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EQUIPPED WITH AIR-REFUELING CAPABILITIES. IF WE

WERE TO CONTEND THAT AN AIR-REFUELING CAPABILITY WAS THE CRITERION BY WHICH THE U.S. JUDGED AN AIRCRAFT TO BE A HEAVY BOMBER, THE SOVIETS WOULD NOT AGREE. TO DO SO, HE SAID, WOULD AMOUNT TO CLASSIFYING ALL NEW FIGHTER BOMBERS AND FIGHTERS AS HEAVY BOMBERS.

I SAID I AGREED. THE U.S. DID NOT BASE ITS CASE FOR CLASSIFYING BACKFIRE AS A HEAVY BOMBER ON ITS AIR-REFUELING CAPABILITIES. ON THE CONTRARY, I SAID, I WAS ASTONISHED THAT MINISTER SEMENOV REPEATED IN HIS PLENARY STATEMENT OF 22 OCTOBER THAT THE U.S. WAS BASING ITS CASE ON BACKFIRE ON ITS AIR-REFUELING CAPABILITIES. I EMPHASIZED THAT OUR FORMAL STATEMENTS AND BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS HAD MADE IT CLEAR THAT WE DO NOT BASE OUR CASE FOR BACKFIRE ON AIR-REFUELING. BELETSKY SAID HE WANTED TO BE ABSOLUTELY CLEAR ON THIS POINT, ALLEGING OUR STATEMENTS ON THIS POINT HAVE BEEN AMBIGUOUS. FURTHERMORE HE SAID THAT STATEMENTS BY SECRETARY SCHLESSINGER AND GENERAL BROWN IN THE PAST HAD TIED BACKFIRE'S INTERCONTINENTAL CAPABILITIES TO AIR-REFUELING. I SAID IT WAS TRUE THAT CERTAIN U.S. OFFICIALS HAD SPOKEN ABOUT BACKFIRE'S AIR-REFUELING CAPABILITIES. HOWEVER, I WANTED TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THE U.S. BASED ITS BACKFIRE CASE ON THE INHERENT CAPABILITIES OF THAT AIRCRAFT BEING ABLE TO DELIVER A SIGNIFICANT PAYLOAD ON THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES WITHOUT INVOLVING AIR-REFUELING.

TRUSOV SAID HE WAS GLAD TO RECEIVE THIS CLARIFICATION SINCE THERE WOULD BE NO FURTHER NEED OF DISCUSSION IF WE DISAGREED ON THIS POINT.

TRUSOV SAID BACKFIRE HAD BEEN DESIGNED AS A MEDIUM BOMBER AND WAS INTENDED TO BE USED IN THAT ROLE. HE SAID THAT RANGE CAPABILITIES OF MILITARY AIRCRAFT WERE DESCRIBED IN TERMS OF COMBAT RADIUS, WHEREAS CIVILIAN AIRCRAFT CAPABILITIES WERE DESCRIBED IN TERMS OF RANGE. HE QUOTED AUTHORITATIVE SOURCES,

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SUCH AS MILITARY AIRCRAFT HANDBOOKS AND THE "AUTHORITATIVE" (SIC) AVIATION WEEK TO BACK HIM UP. I SAID THAT WHILE THIS WAS GENERALLY THE CASE, WE NEED TO TALK TO BACKFIRE'S RANGE IN ORDER TO PROPERLY DESCRIBE ITS INTERCONTINENTAL ROLE. TRUSOV SAID WE COULD PASS OVER THIS POINT AND COME BACK TO IT LATTER.

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P 251415Z OCT 75

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2849

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SALT TWO GENEVA 425

EXDIS/SALT

DEPT ALSO PASS DOD AND SECDEF

SPECAT EXCLUSIVE FOR SECDEF

TRUSOV REPEATED THAT BACKFIRE WAS DESIGNED AND INTENDED FOR PERIPHERAL MISSIONS, THE MOST CRITICAL BEING NATO TARGETS. AFTER SOME DISCUSSION HE SAID THAT A SOVIET AIRCRAFT DESIGNER WHO WAS TASKED TO DESIGN A MODERN MEDIUM BOMBER FOR PERIPHERAL MISSIONS WOULD BUILD ONE TO COVER ALL CONTINGENCIES. THUS, HE SAID, FOR EXAMPLE, A 4000 KM RADIUS WOULD BE REQUIRED. I COMMENTED THAT THIS DISTANCE APPEARED EXCESSIVE (THE STRAIGHT LINE DISTANCE BETWEEN POLTAVA AND ALCONBURY, FOR EXAMPLE, IS LESS THAN 3000 KILOMETERS). TRUSOV SAID THAT AIRCRAFT DESIGNERS NEEDED TO ALLOW FOR MANEUVERING AND FOR VARIOUS FLIGHT PROFILES. ADDITIONALLY, AIRCRAFT WOULD HAVE TO PROCEED FROM WIDELY DISPERSED BASES WITHIN THE SOVIET UNION. THEN THERE WERE QUESTIONS OF WEATHER, OTHER CONTINGENCIES, AND A NEED FOR A FUEL RESERVE. WHEN ONE TOOK ALL THESE FACTORS INTO ACCOUNT, HE SAID A 4000 KILOMETER RADIUS PLUS 10 PERCENT RESERVE ADD UP TO A 9000 KILOMETER RANGE CAPABILITY.

TRUSOV REITERATED THAT THE SOVIETS PLANNED IN TERMS OF COMBAT RADIUS, NOT RANGE, SINCE AIRCRAFT
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NEEDED TO BE LAUNCHED FROM AND RETURNED TO THEIR HOME STATIONS. BELETSKY REINFORCED THIS POINT SAYING THAT THE SOVIETS HAD NO PLANS FOR LAUNCHING ON-WAY MISSIONS.

I SAID THAT WE COULD NOT DEAL IN TERMS OF SOVIET INTENTIONS AND PLANS. IN THE EVENT OF A NUCLEAR WAR BETWEEN THE U.S. AND USSR, WE HAD TO LOOK AT A BOMBER'S INTERCONTINENTAL CAPABILITIES. I SAID THE IDEA OF NON-RECOVERABLE BOMBER MISSIONS WAS SOME 30 YEARS OLD, EVER SINCE GENERAL DOOLITTLE'S RAID ON TOKYO. I SAID THAT SOVIET AIR PLANNERS COULD HARDLY DENY THAT "RECOVERABLE MISSIONS" (THAT IS, RECOVERABLE IN THIRD COUNTRIES) IS A REALISTIC CONCEPT WITHIN MODERN DOCTRINE. TRUSOV SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE PROBLEM. BACKFIRE WAS DESIGNED BY THE SOVIETS FOR PERIPHERAL ROLES AND WAS INTENDED TO BE SO USED. AT THE SAME TIME, HE SAID, THE U.S. WAS LOOKING AT THE BACKFIRE IN TERMS OF ITS INTERCONTINENTAL CAPABILITIES. HE ADDED THAT IF THE SOVIET UNION HAD WANTED TO DESIGN AN OPTIMUM HEAVY BOMBER, THEY WOULD NOT HAVE COME UP WITH BACKFIRE.

I SAID I HAD TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT BACKFIRE WAS NOT OPTIMALLY DESIGNED AS A HEAVY BOMBER. HOWEVER, AN AIRCRAFT OF THE SIZE AND CAPABILITIES OF THE BACKFIRE COULD DO SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE TO THE U.S. IN TIME OF WAR AND THEREFORE COULD NOT BE DISMISSED LIGHTLY. FURTHERMORE, THE BACKFIRE HAD CAPABILITIES COMPARABLE TO THE BISON WHICH WE ALREADY AGREED WAS A HEAVY BOMBER. IF BACKFIRE WAS NOT CLASSIFIED NOW AS A HEAVY BOMBER, WHAT CRITERIA WOULD WE USE IN THE FUTURE TO DETERMINE WHICH AIRCRAFT WERE HEAVY BOMBERS?

TRUSOV SAID THAT THE SIZE AND WEIGHT OF AN AIRCRAFT COULD NOT BE THE SOLE CRITERIA FOR CLASSIFYING IT AS A HEAVY BOMBER; SUCH CHARACTERISTICS CAME OUT TO BE WHATEVER WAS REQUIRED ONCE THE CAPABILITIES FOR PERIPHERAL MISSIONS HAD BEEN DECIDED UPON. I SAID I AGREED THAT SIZE AND WEIGHT COULD NOT BE THE SOLE CRITERIA FOR DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN HEAVY AND

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MEDIUM BOMBERS. HOWEVER, THE FACT THE BACKFIRE WAS NEARLY TWICE AS HEAVY AS THE SOVIET MEDIUM BOMBERS

AND MORE THAN TWICE AS HEAVY AS OURS COULD NOT BE DISCOUNTED. HOWEVER, WEIGHT AND SIZE WERE GENERAL INDICATIONS OF A BOMBER'S CAPABILITIES AND HENCE ITS ROLE, AND IN THIS CASE THE BACKFIRE LOOKS MORE LIKE A HEAVY BOMBER THAN A MEDIUM BOMBER.

TRUSOV INTERJECTED AT THIS POINT THAT HE WANTED TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THE SOVIETS REJECTED OUR POSITION ON THE SO-CALLED "BOMBER VARIANTS" BEING COUNTED IN THE AGGREGATE. I DID NOT COMMENT.

IN CLOSING, TRUSOV SAID HE WAS GLAD WE HAD HAD THIS EXCHANGE SINCE WE HAD NEVER DISCUSSED THE ISSUE IN THIS MANNER IN THE PAST. HE SAID HE HOPED I WOULD BE ABLE TO USE HIS ARGUMENTS IN MY DISCUSSIONS IN WASHINGTON. I SAID I TOO WAS GLAD WE HAD HAD THIS EXCHANGE SINCE IT HAD CLEARED UP A NUMBER OF POINTS; HOWEVER, I WAS NOT OPTIMISTIC THAT I COULD SWAY MUCH OPINION SINCE HE HAD NOT PRESENTED CONCRETE DATA. ALL HE HAD PRESENTED WERE OPINIONS AND HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLES. TRUSOV SAID "YOU CAN USE THE SAME FIGURES WHICH I USED IN THE EXAMPLES, SINCE THEY CHARACTERIZE VERY CLOSELY THE REAL CAPABILITIES OF BACKFIRE." HE ADDED THAT THE CASE DID NOT REST ON THE REFINEMENT OF THOSE FIGURES, RATHER ON THE PRINCIPLES WHICH WE HAD DISCUSSED. END QUOTE.

JOHNSON

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